

NEW YORK'S FINE NEW LIBRARY NEARLY COMPLETED

Will Be Ready Before the Contract Time, and Needs Only the Interior Furnishings.

AFTER ten years of actual construction and an expenditure of upward of \$9,000,000, New York's new public library has been completed.

It is not to be opened for use until May of next year because the furniture has to be installed, and that cannot be done before the middle of April. But the last stroke of the builder's hammer has already fallen. Bag and baggage, the builder himself has been turned out, and at present the mechanical equipment of the structure, such as printing presses, typesetting machines, and book stacks are being installed.

But for the lack of furniture the building could be thrown open in a month. The furniture contractor has until April 12 to complete his contract.

The new library is to be the central home of the Astor Library, founded in 1849; the Lenox, founded in 1870, and the Tilden, founded in 1887. The first two are reference libraries exclusively, and the third, for financial reasons, never materialized as a separate institution.

The architectural style of the building is modern Renaissance, more or less of the Louis XVI. period, with such modifications as conditions and twentieth century needs have suggested. In general, the building is rectangular, with two interior courts. There are four floors besides the cellar. The sides and front are comparatively low, the top floor being lighted by skylights, except at the center and rear, where the main reading room and a public catalogue room, forming a T, rise much higher, with large windows. The main book stack occupies the larger part of the rear of the building, with the main reading room over it.

The main stackroom is 297 feet long, 78 feet wide, with seven floors, each 7 feet 6 inches high. These stacks are Sneed & Co.'s, with marble floor. Each second or third floor corresponds in level with a floor of the building.

The main reading room is 235 feet long, 77 feet wide, and 50 feet high. The main stack has a capacity of 2,700,000 volumes, while the shelving in other parts of the building has a capacity for about 800,000 volumes. The total shelf capacity, therefore, is about 3,500,000 volumes. All together, there are about 75 miles of linear shelving, 63 miles of which are in the stack.

Interior finish is, in general, marble walls and floors, and plaster ceilings for the corridors. Some of the more important rooms have beautifully carved oak ceilings. Four of the principal rooms on the first floor, the Trustees' room on the second floor, and the lobby of the third floor are done in French walnut. Elsewhere the wood is oak in two colors or finishes. The floors are of compressed cork, or cork tile, in the offices and smaller reading rooms. In the larger reading rooms the floor is of a red Welsh quarry tile, with marble borders.

These dates will interest:
Three libraries consolidated, May 23, 1887.

Competition awarded, Nov. 11, 1897.
Removal of reservoir commenced June, 1899.

The architects' fees, &c., will bring this total somewhat above \$9,000,000, or less than the cost of one battleship.

A distinctive feature of the new building is its interior decoration. There is much wood carving of a high order, constituting a splendid tribute to the skill of the American artisans and craftsmen engaged upon it.

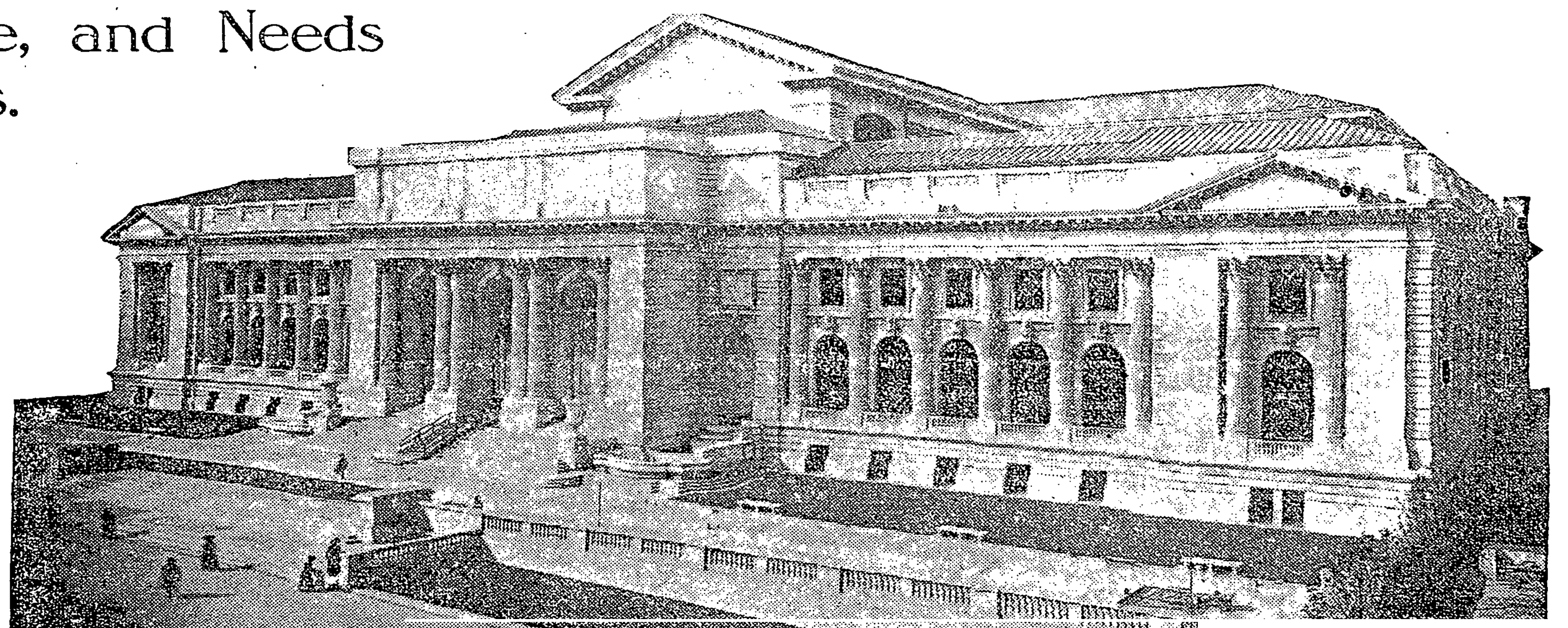
"A century hence," says Mr. Carrère, of the architectural firm which designed the building, "the classic perfection herein attained by the artisans of the Hayden atelier will have rendered this work, then softened with the passing of time, an antique that will be much appreciated. To the public the production of this wood carving may have seemed slow in its progress, but how could such a result be hastily attained? Time is indeed precious, but it is economically expended when the result is so satisfactory."

Two hundred artisans were engaged for years on this work. The men were mostly of German descent. They were

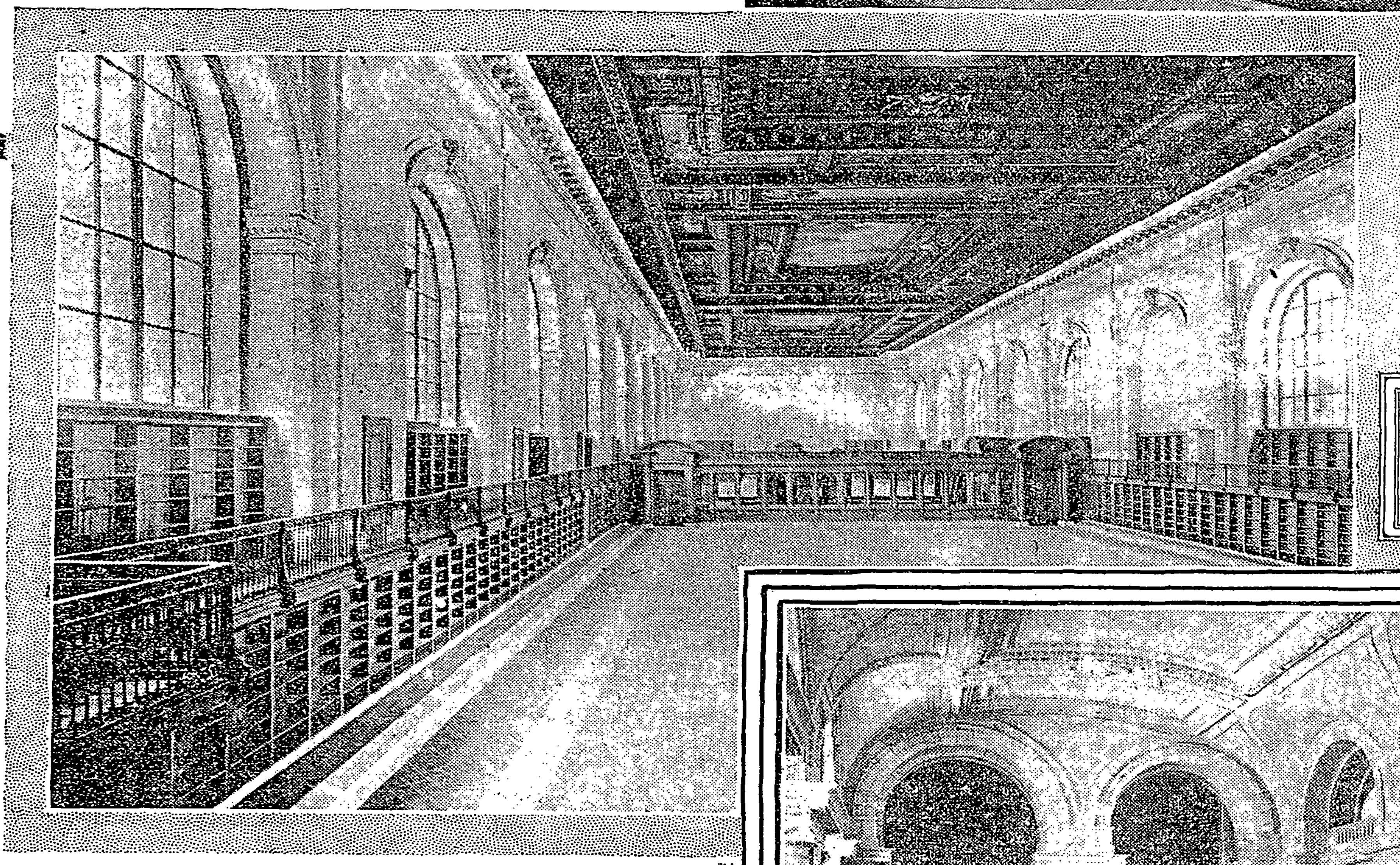
rain stairway, is carved in American white oak. This superb ceiling is a series of four octagons, each twice repeated, the whole inclosing a central octagon, which is the frame for a decorative painting. Delicate French Renaissance motifs, consisting of cupids and mermaids, softly sculptured, and opulent fruits and flowers are united in the general design. The ceiling is 75 feet long by 85 wide, while rows of richly veined marble columns and occasional arches give a basilica-like effect to the beautiful room as a whole.

On the next floor is a charming classroom, which has its wall entirely of Indiana white oak, so finely grained and regularly marked that, quarter-sawn, it makes the warmest and most charming of decoration, arranged in diagonal squares with separating moldings and simple cornices. The quaint beauty of this room, its dimensions being only 34 by 35 feet, has impressed all who have seen it.

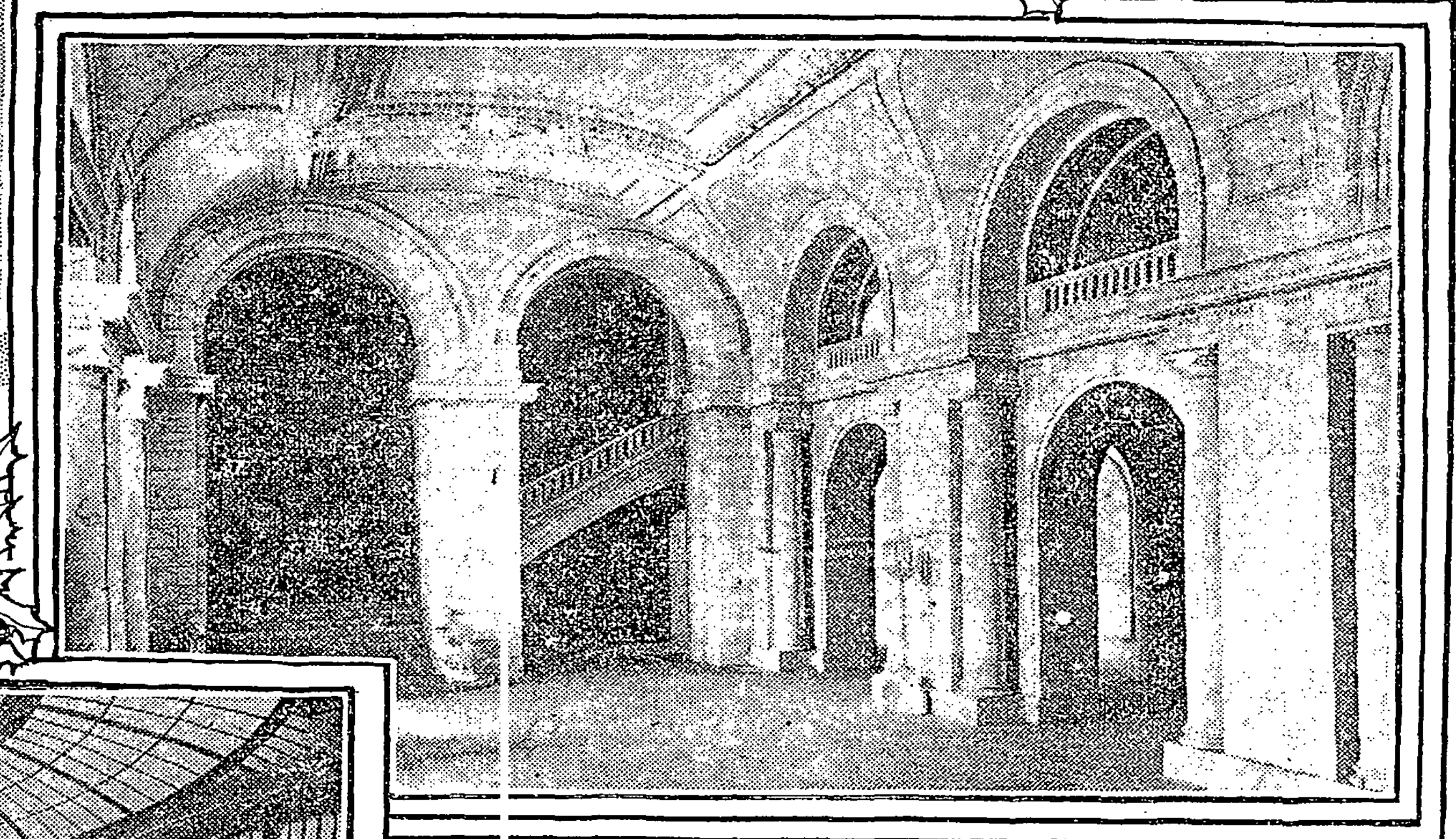
So much for the decoration. The nu-



New York's New Public Library.

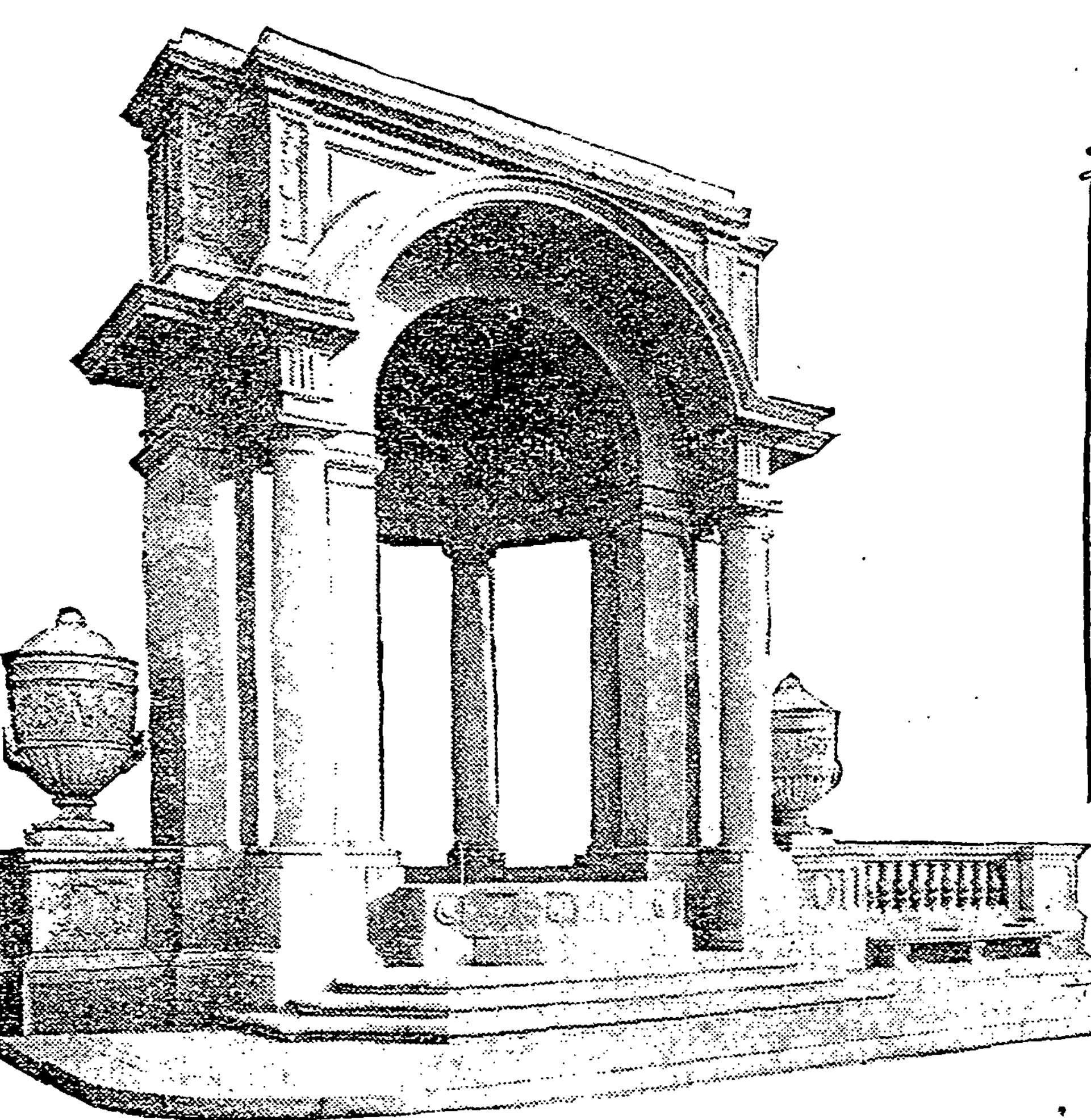


The Larger Reading Room.



Vestibule of the Main Hall.

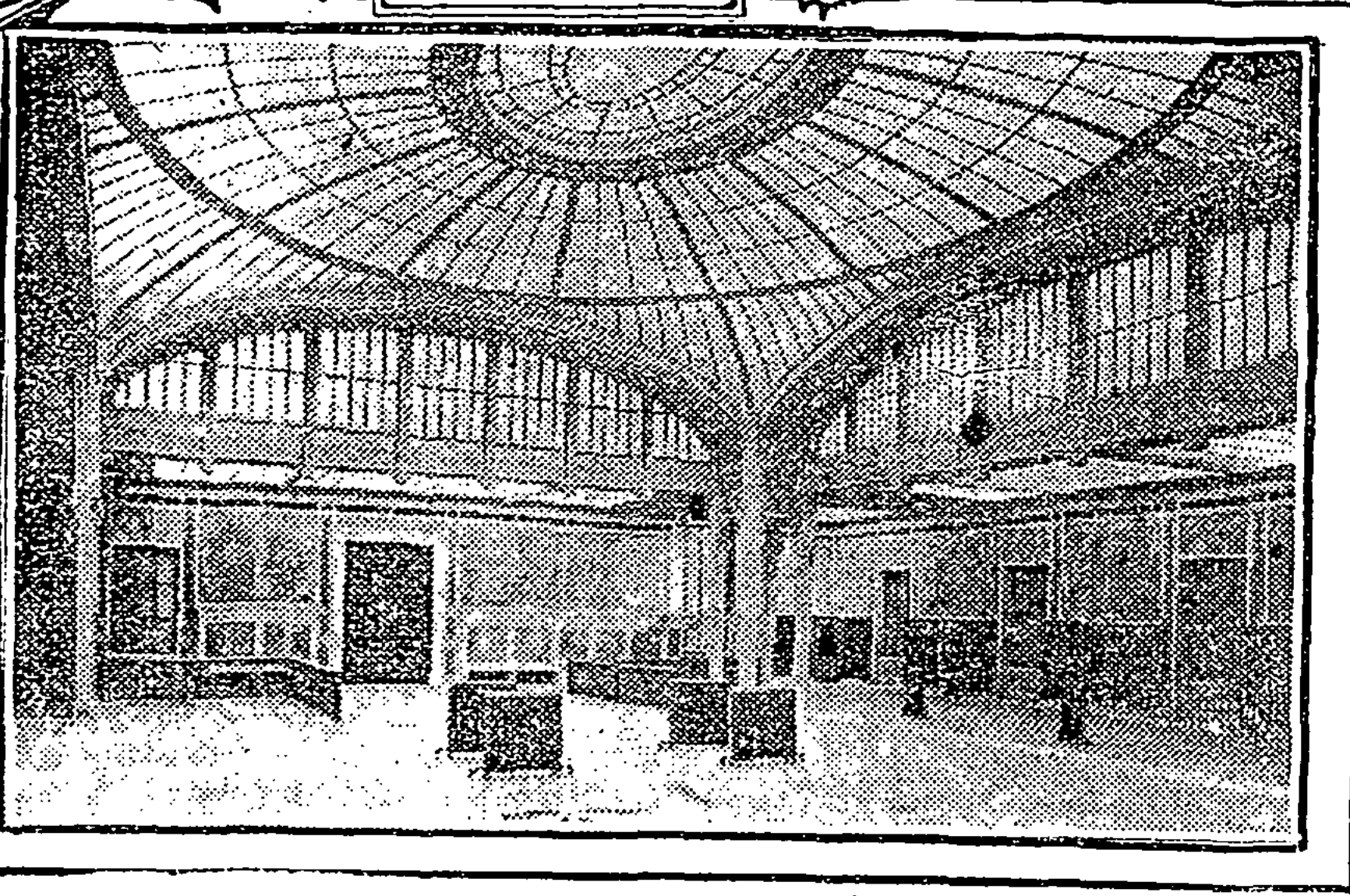
(Photos by Floyd E. Baker.)



Bryant Park Entrance Which Will Be Adorned by a Statue of William Cullen Bryant.

Foundations commenced May, 1900.	
First marble set July, 1902.	
Corner stone laid Nov. 10, 1902.	
Roof on December, 1904.	
This is a tabloid statement of the cost of the structure:	
Removal of old reservoir and building foundations, (Eugene Lentillon, F. Thilleman, Jr., and Herbert Probst).....	\$365,066
Main construction above ground (Norecross Brothers).....	2,875,909
Sneed & Co.'s book stacks.....	916,703
Heating and ventilating apparatus (Frank Dobson).....	290,000
Plumbing, (M. J. O'Brien).....	33,000
Interior finish, (John Peirce Company).....	3,133,000
Electric wiring, &c., (Lord Electric Company).....	173,591
Electric generating plant, (Lord Electric Company).....	71,842
Approaches, (Norecross Brothers).....	523,000
Furniture and equipment, (Cobb Construction Company).....	543,750
Total.....	\$8,985,161

lovers of wood carving by heredity, their skill coming down to them through generations. They worked together, each in his own special line—figure-carving, Renaissance ornament, fruit sculpturing, as the case might be, but always with a certain unity of design in view which referred to the great whole, the purpose and end of all their activity. For the decorative woodwork in the library nearly half a million square feet of fine wood was required. It consisted of Circassian walnut, like that which grows on the steep slopes of the Ural; walnut with a daintiness and grace of line and that characteristic of the groves of France; and acacias upon acres of fine-grained American oak, largely from Indiana, native wood being used in proportion of nearly five to one. The prevailing style of decoration is an intermingling of both the Italian and the French Renaissance. These have been thoroughly harmonized and made congruous instead of merely conglomeric. One of the most beautiful effects is to be found in the Exhibition Room, where rare manuscripts are to be shown. The entire seating of this room, which fronts the



Out Delivery Room.

numerous mechanical devices for facilitating the transaction of business in the library will be one of its most interesting features. So complete in every detail are to be the equipment and service that the 290 rooms, vaults, and halls, so far as the administration goes, will be as closely in touch with one another and with the Director's office, as if the whole were housed in one small chamber. No matter where the book a reader calls for stands in the miles upon miles of shelves in the big main stackroom, it can be easily reached under the careful system worked out. The labor-saving patron of the new library will enter through doors at the basement level of the Forty-second Street side, where elevators will lift him to the reading room of the top floor. Reaching the big public catalogue room in the center of the third floor, the reader, after filling out this slip, will hand it in at a little cage-like department at the rear of the catalogue room and directly over the slip inside a tiny pneumatic tube traveler, and in an instant it will be whisked away by compressed air to the right attendant in charge of the right one of the seven floors of book stacks below, and unless the book is an extremely difficult one to get or is already in use, it will be shot up almost before the reader has time to reach his seat.

This expedition will be accomplished by a contrivance far in advance of the present process of raising and lowering a wooden box filled with books between a pair of wooden uprights by pulling a rope hand over hand. The wooden boxes and ropes now to be seen at the Astor Library will be supplanted by four electric conveyor-elevators. The touch of an electric button will suffice to set the system in operation. There will be no shouting of orders up the elevator shaft, no piercing whistles sounding through tubes; there will be no loud calling of readers' names, numbers will be automatically registered upon annunciators in plain view of all readers, and attendants will deliver books to those who have placed their seat numbers on the call slips.

The basement will be the general utility room. On the Fortieth Street side provision has been made for a hospital for "sick" books in the form of a complete printing office and binding plant. The printing office will be up to date in every respect, equipped with linotype machines and the most modern presses. Double doors have been fitted to the workroom by the machinery in operation. Most complete and convenient means of heating and ventilating have been adopted. These systems are absolutely separate from and independent of each other. They have been worked out to such a nicety that every room in the entire building may be kept at a different temperature if desirable.

Not a broom will be used in keeping this building spick and span and free from dirt and dust from cellar to attic. One of its features is a complete vacuum cleaning system, which will probably also be used for dusting the books and stack room shelves, thus entirely doing away with the

old-time microbe-scattering brushes and dust cloths.

An arrangement for receiving new books has been worked out almost to perfection. Through an entrance on the Fortieth Street side of the building, delivery trucks will pass into the open South court, directly back of the main portion of the building. From there the books will be conveyed to the catalogue department on the second floor. Properly catalogued, they will next pass to the accession room, to the rear of the same room. There a record of each book and its date of accession will be made, after which the volumes will be passed along to their places in the great stack room.

This stack room is one of the most striking features of the library, constituting a mechanical study of itself. The construction of the stacks is of small steel beams and angles, into which floor slabs of marble one and one-half inches thick are fitted. These stacks are already nearly all in place, and in their present state form a veritable wilderness of steel. A striking feature of the stack room, however, is its great lineal extent of shelves. If thirty miles is a fair distance for the average man to walk in a ten-hour day, two days would be required to traverse their entire length were they so arranged that each shelf could be followed from end to end. But this relates only to the shelving in the main stack room. The shelving throughout the building, if laid end to end, would reach from New York to Philadelphia, or about ninety miles.

The principal entrance to the first floor is that on Fifth Avenue, giving direct access to the rotunda with its floor walls and ceilings of white marble, the ceiling being supported by white marble monoliths. Marble stairs on either side lead to the floor above, and through marble arches straight ahead across the corridor is a big exhibition room, the finish of which is also largely of marble. At the right of the rotunda as one enters is the technical science reading room, filling the northeast corner of that floor. Here special students only will be admitted. If one is a man of scholarly attainments and of responsibility and a serious student he will find access to the rarest documents on any particular subject. If he wishes it he will have assigned to him a small private office, which he occupies for a week at a time, and to which will be sent

whatever books or manuscripts he may require. Right here it may be said the library aims to serve three classes of people—the serious student who wishes to find out everything about a subject, the man who is making superficial investigation of a technical theme, and the general reader.

Across the corridor from the technical science reading room are the reading rooms for the blind, the elevator hall, and a lobby. Toward the rear, on the Forty-second Street side of this floor, are two small reading rooms, and back of them in a northwest corner of the floor is a big room devoted to patents.

At the left of the rotunda, as one enters from Fifth Avenue, is a big periodical room, occupying the entire corner to Fortieth Street. Across the corridor from this are several small rooms, among them a reception room, where visitors may see the officers of the library or other persons in the building on business.

The Fortieth Street side of the first floor is practically given up to the administration of the building. There are the private and business offices of the superintendent of the building, the work chief of circulation, and, in the southwest corner, a big receiving and checking room. Between this room and the patent room on the Forty-second Street side of the building and back of the two courts, lies the stack room, running straight up, past the second floor to the public reading room on the third floor.

On the second floor at the right, or Forty-second Street side of the rotunda, is the applied science room, with reading room attached, occupying the entire corner. Along the central portion of the Forty-second Street side of the second floor is a big reading room, which will be devoted to economics, and back of that in the northwest corner of the building is the document room. The rest of the space on this side of the building on the second floor is occupied by small rooms, lobbies, and stair landings. Between the two courts, on this floor also, are the small studies already referred to and a number of reading rooms, as well as two large apartments, one for Hebrew literature and the other for Slavonic. The Fifth Avenue front on the Fortieth Street side of the rotunda on the second floor is

Periodical Stack Room.

given up to the library director's private and public offices, the Trustees' room, and a large lecture room. The Trustees' room is on the Fortieth Street, Fifth Avenue corner, with the Director's offices just beyond to the north. These rooms are finished in marble and oak and are equipped with every convenience, including baths. Across the corridor are other bathrooms. An extra room for the Director's use across the corridor from his room, and a second series of small studies is also on that side of the corridor. On the Fortieth Street side of the second floor are, in the order named and extending back from the Trustees' room, an order room, a cataloguing room, and in the southwestern corner an accession room.

On the third floor in a big room in the center of the Fifth Avenue front will be the Stuart collection of rare works now at the Lenox Library. On the Forty-second Street side of this room and connected with it are two picture galleries occupying the northeast corner. Along the Forty-second Street side of this floor also is a series of small rooms, among them a picture gallery, a reading room, a music room, and a photograph room with a stereo chest and a photographer's dark room. Beyond these rooms in the northwest corner of this floor is a large public reading room under a glass roof. There is also a good-sized reading room across the corridor near the elevator shaft on this side of the third floor. At the Fortieth Street side of the room devoted to the Stuart collection is a large room fronting on Fifth Avenue which will be devoted to art and architecture, and beyond in the southeast corner of this floor is a room to be used in housing the print collection now at the Lenox Library.

Along the central portion of the Fortieth Street side of the third floor are four rooms, one of which is to be devoted to the Print Collection, one to Americana and manuscripts, one to rare books, and still another to rare manuscripts. Across a corridor from these rooms is a map room, and at the rear, in the southwest corner of the floor, is another large reading room under a glass roof, corresponding to the one on the opposite corner. Between these rooms and connecting with them is the main public reading room, built, as already stated, directly over the big stack room. This room has a high solid copper-covered roof, rising above the main portion of the building, and is lighted by a series of big windows on both sides of its entire length. In the center is a small, cage-like delivery apartment, electric elevators and pneumatic tubes connecting it with the stack room below. Between the two courts, and connecting with the reading room and the Fifth Avenue corridor on the third floor, is a public catalogue room. The main reading room is to have oak bookcases, and galleries surround the entire chamber. The walls are of artificial Chené, with plaster cornices. All the exterior floors are of ornamental bronze. Conveniently placed throughout the building will be public drinking fountains supplied with sterilized feed water. At night the building will be lighted by about 25,000 incandescent bulbs.

Contrary to an impression in some quarters, not a dollar of Mr. Carnegie's money has gone into the erection of the new building, and not a dollar of his will be spent in its maintenance. The city gives and equips the building, the Board of Trustees conducts its activities with the income from the three library foundations in their hands.